Sociological Dimensions of Development
With Applications to Madagascar

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Abstract

In this paper, we propose a general framework for the study of developing countries based on a limited number of basic axioms: (1) Each society comprises several component groups: (2) Each group has its own characteristics, its own rules for functioning, its own internal logic; (3) Each group entertains relations with the other groups: (4) The set of all n groups make up the system: (5) The system is linked to the outside world.

The essence of the proposed model is that "Society" in developing countries is not a homogeneous entity, but is a set made up of groups or elements that are clearly differentiated. In order to get the whole set to move, it is necessary to design, and then implement, strategies, policies and actions that are appropriate for the various components and not necessarily uniform and/or identical for all of them.

Madagascar serves as the case reference for this study. The hypothesis formulated is that Madagascar society comprises four distinct component-groups: the modern group: the pre-modern group: the neo-traditional group; and the traditional group. Study and observation lead to some fairly obvious conclusions: (1) The four groups or communities that make up the Madagascar society constitute one system: (2) The system interacts with the outside world, and most of these relations with the outside take place through only one of the four component-groups: (3) For the system to move, all of its groups or parts must move, if not synchronously, at least together.

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Introduction

The problem that the present-day world, or at least the overwhelming majority of Humanity is faced with can be formulated as follows. First, why have "development" efforts in so many countries failed in the past, and even up to the present ? And secondly, what can be done (differently) at present to ensure, if not "success", at least an improved performance, in the future?

The present paper starts with one basic premise and a sub premise. The basic premise is that past efforts have failed because they have been aimed at the wrong problems, or they have addressed only part of the problem is (and in any case, not all of it). The sub-premise can be stated as follows: the wrong problems, or only part(s) of the problem, have been addressed, because the "object" of all efforts---the "thing" on which efforts are to be applied---was/is not known ; and if/when it was/is known, in any case it was/is ill-defined.

The paper therefore gets "back to basics". Section 1 deals with definitions. Section 2 contains a brief overview of past performance and offers an alternative framework for the future. Section 3 considers the specific case of Madagascar, in relation to its past history, present realities and future perspectives.

1. Basic Definitions

1.1. The Development Context as Country, Nation, or Society

There is an abundant literature dealing with "development" at the international level: scientific journals, reviews and periodicals, news-magazines, newspapers and, of course, numerous monographs, volumes and books. In most of this literature, "the thing" that is to be developed, or that tries to develop itself, is usually considered to be "a country" or "a nation". When various authors study the same problem at a lower level, they refer to other units such as regions, which are subdivisions of nations and/or countries. Depending on the context, development context can be a country, a nation, or a region.

Another possibility is to refer to the development context as a society. This would present several advantages. In particular, it covers the meaning of each and all of the previous words. For society encompasses several dimensions, especially the human aspect (i.e., "nation") and the geographical or space component (i.e., "country" and "region").

A "society" is a set of human beings living in a given spaces at a given time. The basic unit is the individual human being, but the unit cannot survive alone and is part of different groups: the first natural group is the core family, and their immediate

descendants, followed by larger social configurations based on broader institutional configurations and responsibilities.

A society may be defined as a set of interrelated institutional groupings. The groups that are members of the set are linked together by one basic concern, namely the survival of the whole. In turn, each group can be identified by some characteristics which differentiate it from the other groups within the society. Broadly speaking, these characteristics include, on the one hand, what may be called its tradition, which relates to the group as an entity ; and, on the other hand, the code of conduct, which regulates and determines, what constitutes acceptable behavior for the group's individual members.

In brief, each component-group of society can be characterized by a specific value system. This value system has a definite function: to preserve the group's interest, defined in the broadest sense, that is, to ensure its survival, its reproduction, and its prosperity. Thus, each group has to interact with other groups within its mother-set, which is the society to which it belongs, as well as with groups belonging to societies other than its own.

It is precisely these contacts with outside groups (that is, from outside the society) that have led to the marked differentiation of the various groups that make up "a society", especially in the Third World. Some groups have been more exposed to the outside world, for various reasons (geography, choice, or preference, etc.), while other have been spared such incursions. Among those exposed, some groups have been more receptive to new ideas and new ways of doing things than others. One result has been a marked differentiation of social groupings characterized frequently by vertical stratification and substantial inequalities in income and wealth.

Societies in the developing world rarely constitute one homogeneous entity, even if we abstract for the moment usual classifications of rich and poor, or rural and urban, or ethnic affiliation. In fact, in most developing countries society comprises several distinct component-groups, each quite different from each other. As such, these distinct groups often live side by side and remain relatively ignorant of other groups for reasons of local affiliation and value structures.

The whole and its component-groups may be characterized by the intensity of various flows within the unit and among the units. First, the flow of ideas, people, and goods and services is very intense inside a given group; in any case, it is more intense among members of the same group, than between one group and another group, or between members of one group and members of another group. Secondly, there exists a flow of

ideas, men and goods and services between the various component-groups of the whole; this flow is more intense among the groups within the society, than between the given society and another society, or between groups of one society and groups of another society.

The number of component-groups for a society need not be fixed. It probably differs from one place to another, and evolves over time. Their relations to each other, and the links of the whole and its component-groups, to the outside world, may also vary. Figure 1 offers four different cases, or ways of representing a society that comprises 5 groups. For all cases, the outside world is assumed 'to surround the society, represented by either a square or a circle. (For convenience a two-dimension figure is used here, but adjustment could be made for three-dimensional representation squares would then be replaced by cubes, circles by spheres**.**

Case 1 shows the various component-groups of the given society as vertical bars. This means that two adjacent groups have closer or more intense relations with each other than with the other three groups. It also implies that the groups situated at either end (Group 1 and Group 5) are more exposed to, or entertain more intense relations with, external influences than is the case for the other groups.

The same is true for Case 2, where the 5 component-groups are represented as horizontal bars stacked one on top of the other: Group 1 and Group 5 remain more exposed to the outside, because they offer more surface for contacts (the outside limits). In addition, this representation would indicate that there exists a hierarchical relation among the various groups, with Group 1 being at the bottom of the pile and Group 5 at the top. The statement made earlier for Case 1 regarding, the relations among adjacent groups remains valid.

Case 3 represents one society as a pie, with the 5 component-groups as 5 pie wedges. In addition to the obvious links between adjacent wedges, this implies two additional characteristics. one is that there exists one contact point through which all five groups can meet. The other is that all groups are equally exposed to the outside world: this is not true for Case 1 and Case 2, and entirely excluded for Case 4.

Figure 1
A Five-Group Society Model

Case 1 Vertical Bars   **Case 2 Horizontal Stacks**

Case 3 Pie Wedges   **Case 4 Concentric Rings**
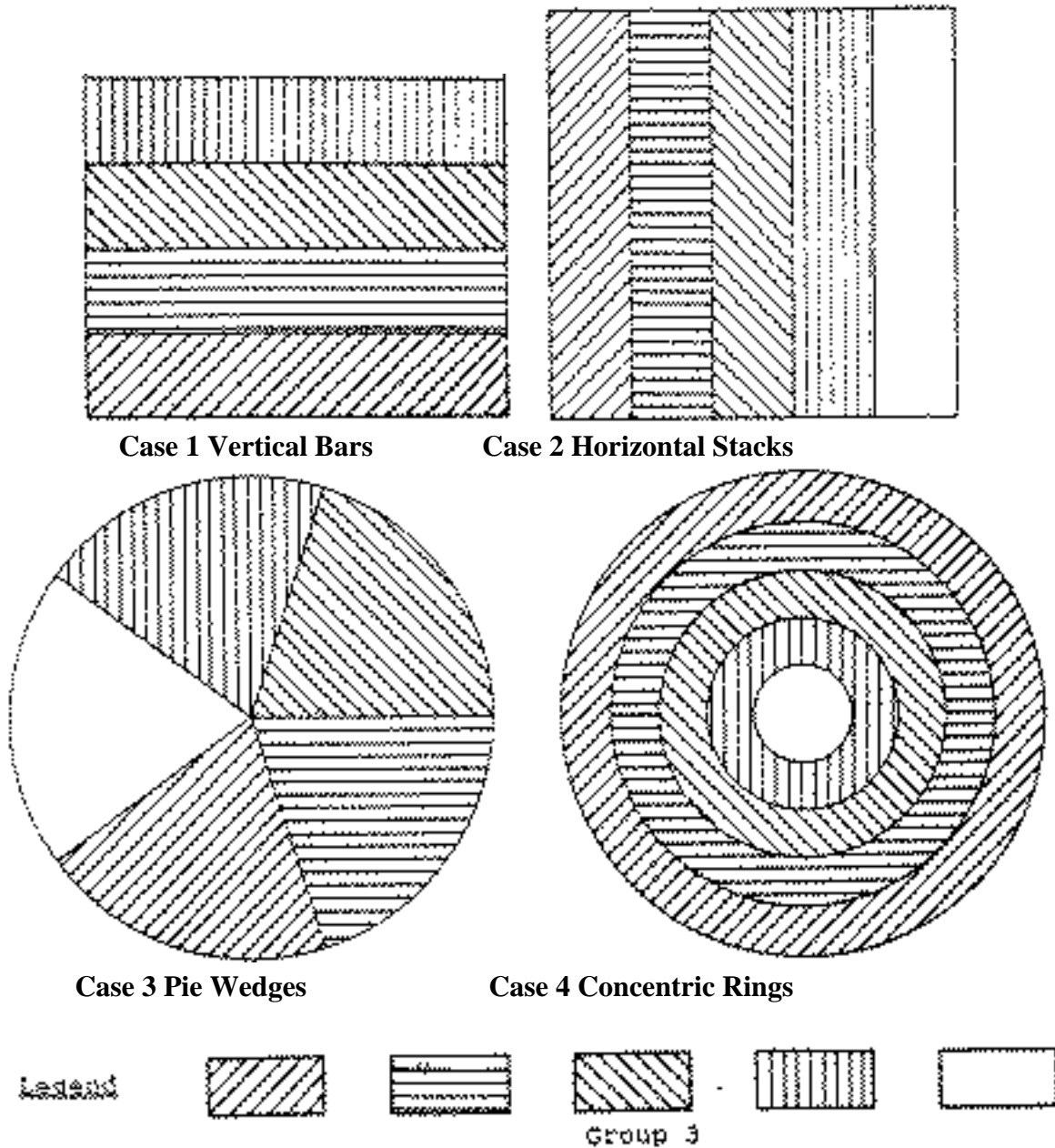
Case 4 in fact shows that only Group 1 has any-contacts with the outside world. In this instance, the various groups are represented as concentric rings. Except for the *inner* ring, which has contacts with only another group, all other groups are in relation with two other groups: Group 1 has relation with Group 2 and is the only one exposed to or communicating with the outside world.

These four cases show representations of the types of relations that may exist between the component-groups of a society among themselves, and between them and the outside world. Several features need to be specified right from the outset.

One is that these groups are not defined along "classical" considerations: in particular they are not, or at least they should not be, based on considerations of sex (male vs. female), age, race, tribe, ethnic backgrounds, sector of activities, living area (rural vs. urban) religious affiliation, wealth, income, etc.

Another characteristic trait would be that, for any given society, two or more of these case figures may be relevant. One would be applicable when examining cultural and religious interactions, another one for social and political matters, and still a third and different one for economic relations. Other words, patterns of inter-group links may vary from one domain to the other. Leading groups can change, and may not necessarily be the same in cultural and religious affairs as in the social and political field. In the same way, politically dominant groups may not always be prominent in economic matters.

A third fundamental feature is that a society and its component-groups work as a system. This means, on the one hand that each group has its own characteristics and its own dynamics; and on the other, that for one whole to move, all of its parts must move together --- otherwise, everything will very rapidly come to a stand-still. (Specialists would merely state that a systems approach would be applicable, and even recommended, in the study of this "whole".)

It is precisely the relations and I contacts with the outside world that seem to have led to the heterogeneity observed in most societies or, at the very least, to have accentuated further whatever heterogeneity may have existed before. (By "outside world", we mean here outside the society under study.) In fact, historically it can be said that in any given society, component-groups have reacted differently to the outside world. Some have gone out and searched out new opportunities and experiences. Others have remained "at home", and have seen foreigners come, stay and/or go. Among these stay-at-home groups, interactions with the foreigners have taken different forms: some groups have rejected (In some cases, fought against) foreign influence: other groups have welcomed the the foreign incursion for various reasons (for selfish group interest; because of the attraction of the newt or because they saw in the foreign ways method to solve their own problems: technological, existential, religious, etc.): and a third group may have passively acquiesced to the foreign intrusion (either because they saw in it no immediate threat to their group's survival or because they felt strong enough on their own to be indifferent to what was happening to their society as a whole).

These attitudes toward the outside world in fact are determinant of the characteristics of the component-groups of a society. As a first approximation, three aspects may be seen to emerge as defining the feature of each group. These are the level of technology, especially for production: the intensity of exchanges and their degree of monetization; and the extent and nature of the communication network ('extent refers to whether it takes place within the group, between the group and other groups within the given society, or between the group and other groups situated outside the society).

A visit to any developing country will reveal to the most casual observer that the technology used often spans the whole spectrum of human ingenuity. The most striking example may be that of transportation of goods. Some groups may use human porters (on head, or on shoulders/back): others may use carts, pulled by humans or by bullocks or other animals: others may already be more familiar with mechanical vehicles (automobiles, trains); while for still others, the use of airplanes for transport may have already become commonplace. And yet, all of the groups are part of the same society.

Similarly, when looking at the exchanges carried out by members of a given group, one may notice the scope of such exchanges: mostly among members of the group, or with other groups belonging to the society, or with groups outside the society (i.e. "foreign" groups). But what is most striking is the degree of monetization of those exchanges. For some groups, money plays really very little role: they may use it exclusively for their exchanges with the other groups and even for that, they will try to earn only the strict minimum to

satisfy their needs for whatever they cannot produce: whereas for their intra-group exchanges, they do not resort to money (or if they do, very little) for they may settle their accounts among themselves in other ways: barter, mutual help, labor, etc. At the other extreme, for some groups all transactions, (exchanges, relations, etc.) are effected through the medium of money: this is the case not only in their contacts with other groups (both inside and ouutside the given society), but also for the group members among themselves.

As for the third aspect that differentiates groups within society, it relates to the communication system, its extent and its nature. The extent refers to whether communication --- i.e. the flow/circulation of ideas and information --- takes place within the group, between the group and other groups within the given society, or between the group and other groups situated outside the society. In part, the extent or scope of communication is determined by its nature or its medium of support (in a sense, by technology): does information travel mostly by word-of-mouth (oral/verbal), or by way

of written words (books, newspapers), or by audio-visual means (radio, television)? This varies from one group to another, the prevalence of each medium being determined by income and technology to a considerable extent, but also in many cases by long tradition.

The Development Context Revisited.

The present section started with a question: what is the institutional structure that is to develop, or is to be developed, or tries to develop itself? What we view as society consists of constituent groups differentiated by technology, by varying degrees of monetization in economic relations, and in terms of vertical stratification and the degree of intergroup interactions.

However differentiated groups may be, they share a sense of belonging to one common whole --- the society --- and all have a stake in ensuring the survival of the common entity: for the reproduction and continuity of each individual component-group is entirely conditioned by the society's own survival.

1. 2. Development

Given the nature of society as a system, how then can one define development? It is not our intention in the present paper to offer a review of the endless controversies regarding what constitutes development. Rather, what we propose to do is to present a working or operational definition, and that it will allow a sufficient level of predictive coherence to the various interactions among and between the various social groupings.

What Development Is Not.

Whatever development is, it can be said that it is not simply the growth or the increase in the availability of material things. For one, good or services in can be made available from outside the given society through no merit effort or action on its part: in that case, the entity becomes a simple consumer, a mere recipient, a passive container. For another, by some quirks, of nature or of fate, the society may benefit from a windfall increase in goods and services in one year: its own capacity would not allow it to replicate such a once-for-all event on a regular basis . (It is understood here, of course, that all goods and services are to be used to meet the needs of the members of the given society, both its present and future members.) Thus development must not equated with the mere presence of goods and services.

What Development Is

Development may be defined by four characteristics. One: development is not a state to be attained; It is a process by which a society meets its raison d'etre, i.e., ensures its survival in a manner satisfactory to all its members. Two: development may be said to be

well under way when a society possesses or has acquired the capacity to generate wealth and comfort for all, or* at least most, of its population: to continually adapt its structures, equipment and infrastructure for production and exchange, in view of changing, relations between needs and resources (population, various types of resources, technology, etc.). Three: for development to be genuine and durable, this capacity to generate wealth and to continually adapt most be internal and intrinsic to the society, i.e., it must be mastered by and embodied in its members. Four: given the state of the world today, this intrinsic capacity must allow the society not only to me the needs of its members but must also be strong enough, first to withstand possible incursions of foreign groups, and second to successfully hold its own in the international economy.

In short, development is not defined as results. Rather, it consists in setting in motion a mechanism for achieving results on a continuous basis, and building into the system some mechanism to keep the momentum going.

2. Experience, Performance, and the Analytical Framework

Given the foregoing definitions of society as the entity to be developed, and of what constitutes development, the present section will briefly review past experience and present performance in developing countries, with particular emphasis on Madagascar as a case study. In so doing, we can illustrate the limitations of traditional approaches to development policy, limitations that have largely ignored the underpinnings of social dynamics, from which we will derive an alternative approach.

2.1. Experience and Performance

As is well known, success stories are atypical of the vast majority of developing countries. If we use the narrow definition of increases in real per capita income as our measure of development, there are vast numbers of countries that are little changed from conditions that prevailed over thirty years ago. The best indicator of this sad state of affairs may be that the United Nations is now in its fourth "Development Decade", i.e., that the first three have failed largely to live up to expectations.

Nowhere have development efforts fared so poorly as in Africa. Not only does poverty remain widespread, but it is spreading, both in absolute and in relative terms. In relative terms, developing countries are lagging farther and farther behind other countries: publications of various development agencies, both national and international, attest to Africa's plight. Worse yet, in absolute terms, there has been more or less continuous decline In living standards,' whether measured by monetary indices (e.g.

income or production per capita) or by physical yardsticks (e.g. food intake), particularly during the last decade and a half.

Within the so-called developing countries, however, not everybody is poor or getting poorer. A few are extremely rich (by any standard), some are well-to-do, others are average, a large number are poor. It is the very large majority who are very poor.

2.2. Conventional Development Policy Models

In view of the so-far-intractable problems of developing countries, actions have been undertaken both from within and from without by various national and international development institutions. These actions have, implicitly or explicitly, been based largely on policy models trying to represent the working of the real world.

Among the earliest modern efforts to devise development policy models is the one developed by Harrod and Domar. It relates an economy's growth rate to its rate of investment and/or saving and to the underlying efficient of its investment. Although extended and expanded to reflect greater detail in individual applications, quantitative models such as the one developed by Harrod and Domar are all based on the underlying notion of economic homogeneity, i.e., that there is universal applicability of the model, and that institutional differences among societies do not impede or undermine the basica quantitative approach to understanding and transforming an economy onto the path:.of development.

From the one-sector homogeneous world of Harrod-Domar, economists have since moved to devise more realistic multisector models. Sectoral dichotomy was the key, based on a supposed antinomy/opposition/contradiction between a "modern" sector on the one hand, and a "traditional" one on the other. The best known was that developed by Arthur Lewis, which viewed traditional society as having a labor surplus which when suitably rechanneled to the modern sector could provide for sustainable economic development.

Such dichotomous models have formed the basis for trickledown approaches to economic development. By placing emphasis on the modern sector, eventually wealth and income would flow to the traditional sector through the dynamic expansion process. The rest of the society (i.e., the so-called traditional sector) would automatically follow.

Strategies and policies at the domestic and at the international level have been based frequently on this trickle down approach to development, regardless 'of whether it is expressed clearly or remains implicit. In particular, macrobased approaches (i.e. based on

macro variables such as gross domestic production, import, export, investment, etc.) assume there is one homogeneous whole, or at least that there is only one part of a society at counts, that one only needs to worry about that part and the rest will either follow or can left to itself without much risk.

Policy actions based on the "orthodox" approach have not worked for vast segments of populations in the developing world. This has been true both of domestic policies and of external programs, and in particular the numerous so-called "aid", "assistance", or "cooperation", programs.

If we look for reasons for the limited success of orthodox development policies, three main ones can be singled out. First (and this is among the most charitable one for the "orthodox" model): the actions proposed and undertaken were correct and worked for the "modern" group; but they were not enough to trickle down to or to carry along the traditional group, the end-result being that the efforts did not generate sufficient momentum to get the whole society into movement.

Second: the actions were wrong in the first place, because even the "modern" group in developing countries does not behave or react in exactly the same way as in developed countries; for example, markets may not be as free and open, motivations and values may differ, etc.; in short, differing realities would have necessitated a different set of tools, or at least some adaptation of existing ones.

Third: even if the dichonomus model could in fact faithfully reflect reality, it does not reflect the nature and function of the mechanisms that would provide the link between the modern and traditional groups; in a way, the transmission belt between the two should have been better explicated, and this could have provided useful indications for actions.

The challenge facing decision-makers and thinkers in developing countries is therefore three-sided. One: to understand the system (i.e., society), its components, and the links between or among. Two: on that basis, to design appropriate strategies and policies for the whole and for the elements. Three: to continuously monitor the system's movements, evaluate the impacts and adjust the actions, because the interactions among components may vary from one phase to another as the system achieves various stages of development.

2.3. A Proposal for a More Inclusive Developmental Framework
In our view, development policies can not succeed unless they take into account the complexities of social organizations as part of the decision process. One simple way to do

so is the develop an n-group approach that incorporates the principal interactions among principal social institutions and how these interactions are tied to underlying dimensions of economic behavior.

Devising a more inclusive developmental framework requires a more detailed specification of social and economic dynamics. While details would vary from country to country, several underlying principles should apply:

1. Each society comprises several component groups, each being made up by individual human members.

2. Each group has its own characteristics, its own rules for functioning, its own internal logic.

3. Each group entertains relations with the other groups, by links that are more or less strong, more or less direct.

4. The set of all n groups make up the system.

5. The system is linked to the outside world some elements have direct and/or close ties to the outside : others have less direct and/or less close (or no) ties with it.

From these principles, several guidelines for development policies emerge. First, do not try to harmonize or standardize development measures to fit uniformly for all groups. -Secondly, let differences and contradictions --- and even antagonisms --- continue to exist. And thirdly, utilize group differences as the basis for injecting dynamism into the developmental process. Such differences can foster linkages among groups, much as Albert Hirschman once argued that backward and forward linkages are the key to the developmental process.

"Society" in developing countries is not a homogenous entity, but is a set made up of groups or elements that are clearly differentiated. In order to get the whole set to move, it is necessary to design, and then implement, strategies, policies and actions that are appropriate for the various components and not necessarily uniform and/or identical for all of them.

3. Examples from Madagascar

Madagascar provides ample evidence of the importance of social dynamics to the development process. It also illustrates how traditional policies can fail when social differentiation is not taken into account.

3.1. Society and Groups

Madagascar society has been shaped profoundly by the degree of isolation arising from its island status. This geographical element has created powerful pressures for social integration, while at the same time creating a sense of social distinction from the outside world.

Over time, various groups in Madagascar society have been exposed to outside influences, and which have brought about change in many domains. As Madagascar society has evolved, four somewhat distinct groups, or communities, have emerged:
- the modern;
- the pre-modern;
- the neo-traditional group;
- and the traditional.

The "modern" community can be characterized as the group which has embraced more or less fully the ways of doing things in other parts of the world, especially those parts that are considered to be developed. Its members cultivate and sustain personal and professional or business contacts with their conter-parts in many foreign countries. Work environments and technology are modern and reflect developed country conditions and standards. Economic exchange is relatively monetized, and associated institutions embody key features found in more developed countries.

The "neo-traditional" community is quite different. In terms of technology, instead of tractors for agriculture, its members use hand-hoes (angady) or hand-knives (kalaz): where the former travel by plane, they usually walk or at most take public transportation. Their exchanges are only partly monetized. Their communication system and links are limited mostly to the community's members, although some information may filter in or out to a limited extent.

The "pre-modern" community constitutes a mixed or transition group. While exposed to modern technology, they may not have yet come to make full use of it. Similarly, their transactions are already monetized to a large extent, but some form of barter or direct exchange still persists. Some families in the cities still return periodically to their birth-places to do their share of community work or other obligations, and upon their

return bring back to the cities cereals, vegetables, produce and various kinds of foodstuff which they neither grow nor paid for. As for communication they still keep very close links with their parents in the neotraditional community and, at the same time, they have already one foot in the wider world of the modern community (including more or less ready access to such media as radio and television) .

The "traditional" community can be defined in terms of its isolation from the other groups. They have remained at a relatively elementary stage of technology. While the neotraditional community is practicing agriculture as a matter of course, the traditional group may still be at the level of simple food-gathering and/or hunting to ensure its survival. Keeping mostly to themselves, the members have a minimum level of monetized transactions. In some cases, communication remains so much within the group that the group's very existence may not even be known to others outside. This traditional community may include among its members village dwellers "lost" somewhere in the forests and in the bush, or the poorest and most destitute or "marginalized" of the urban dwellers. They live in a socially and economically separate world, a world of their own.

It is tempting to say that the traditional group corresponds to the poorest segment of the population, the neotraditional group to the peasant population in the rural areas, the pre-modern would be the so-called "information" sector in the cities, and the modern sector would comprise the managers (cadres) and employees of the public administration and the organized public and private sector. But things are not so simple, and the four communities as defined above do not easily fit into the customary classification. While it is true that the bulk of the neo-traditional community lives in the rural areas, it is equally true that many urban dwellers belong to the neo-traditional community as well. Conversely, most members of the modern group live in cities: but some rural areas also have members of the modern community.

If one may venture a guess, or "guess-timate", one would start with the following hypothesis. Of the country's total population, 20 per cent live in the cities and 80 per cent in the rural areas. Of the cities' inhabitants, 10 to 20 percent belong to the modern group, 20 to 30 percent to the pre-modern, 40 to 60 percent to the neo-traditional and 10 percent to the traditional community. For the rural areas, the corresponding figures might be 5 percent: ,0 percent, 75 percent and 10 percent. Simple calculation would provide the overall numbers relating to society as a whole: the ranges would respectively be 6 to 8 percent, 12 to 14 percent, 68 to 72 percent and 10 percent.

After some rounding to take into account the very rough nature of these approximations, it might be stated that at the present time, the population of Madagascar may be distributed as follows among society's four component-groups (cf. Figure 2)

- 5 to 10 percent belong to the modern group ;
- 10 to 15 percent belong to the pre-modern group
- 65 to 75 percent belong to the neo-traditional community, and
- 10 percent belong to the traditional community

3.2. Relations among Groups

As was seen in Section 1, the types of relations that Component-groups entertain among themselves can be quite diverse: at least four different possibilities were presented (vertical bars, stacked horizontal bars, pie-wedges, and concentric rings). It was also stated that two or more different types may be simultaneously applicable to a given society.

In the case of Madagascar, three configurations may simultaneously apply, in order to obtain a more or less complete look of the society. These are shown in Figure 3. Part A shows the religious/cultural relations among the groups as taking the shape of pie-wedges: the groups all meet at one central point, and they are all equally exposed to the outside world. Part B refers to the social/political field: the traditional community lies at the bottom of the stack (in a sense: the "pecking order"), while the modern group finds itself at. the top of the pile. Finally, Part C shows the inter-group relations in the economic domain as four successive

Figure 2.
Estimated Population Distribution among Society's Component-Groups
in Madagascar

Legend

Traditional	Neo-traditional	Modern
(10 %)	(65 to 75 %)	(5 to 10%)
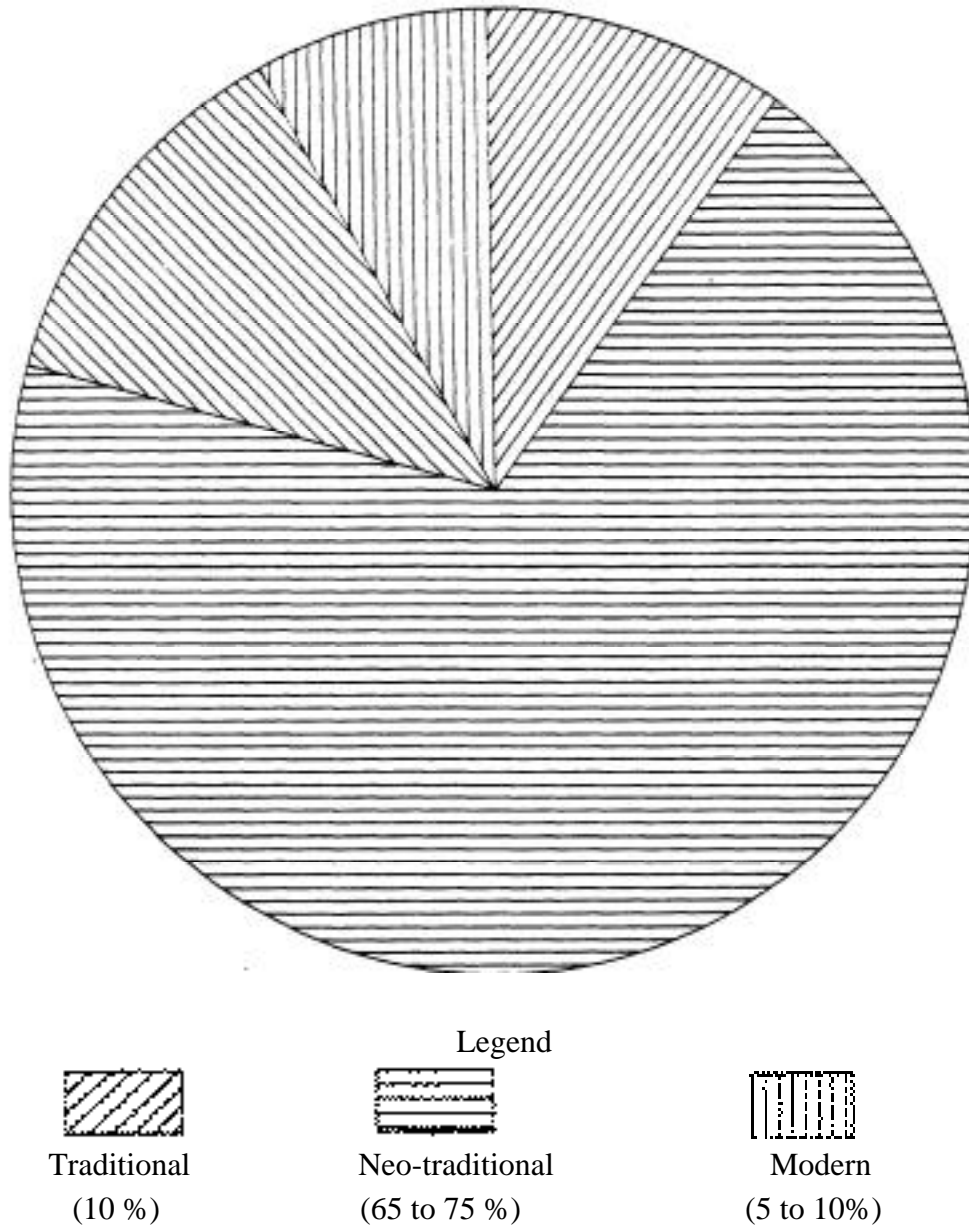
Conclusion

    In this paper, we have outlined an approach to development policy that places emphasis on the heterogeneous nature of social groups. Using examples from Madagascar, we emphasize that the limitations of past development policies are due largely to the failure to take into consideration these differences.